

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Staffing Portfolio Holder

11 August 2009

AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / Equality and Diversity Officer

DRAFT GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME AND RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

Purpose

1. To request for the Housing Portfolio Holder to comment on and endorse the draft Gender Equality Scheme and Race Equality and recommend that Cabinet adopt the equality schemes in September 2009.
2. This is a key decision because
 - it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in all wards of the District.
 - it raises new issues of policy, or is made in the course of developing proposals to amend the policy framework, or is a decision taken under powers delegated by the Council to amend an aspect of the policy framework.
 - it is of such significance to a locality, the Council or the services which it provides that the decision-taker is of the opinion that it should be treated as a key decision.

and it was first published in the April 2009 Forward Plan.

Background

3. The Council has identified equalities as a priority area in which it must make progress because of the findings of the Corporate Governance Inspection of 2007/08; the need to achieve compliance with statutory requirements; and deliver relevant Council Aims and Actions. The Improvement Board also identified this as a key area for the Council. The Council also needs to be more in step with its partners in the LSP and LAA. Equality and diversity will be an area of focus for the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).
4. Progress has been held back over the last year because of the illness and subsequent sad loss of the former Equality and Diversity Officer and the need to address other improvement priorities.
5. However, a new Equality and Diversity Officer, Paul Williams, has been in post since January 2009 and the secondment of Equalities Project Officer, Andrew Francis, to support Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) has further strengthened the progress made by the Council on equalities. Further capacity has been provided through consultancy support for the development and revision of the policy framework.
6. As a listed public body, South Cambridgeshire District Council must comply with the statutory duties enshrined in the:
 - Race Relations Amendment Act (2000)
 - The Equality Act (2006)

Implications

7.	Financial	There is a dedicated Equality and Diversity budget. The Council is being supported and sponsored by the joint East of England Regional Assembly and Improvement East project "Meeting the Equality Challenge." The Project consists of a variety of measures including training activities, master class workshops, and in-house support.
	Legal	Discrimination law protects people and the Council has a public responsibility to ensure that it adheres to its legislative requirements. Statutory duties in relation to equalities ensure that our services are open to, and, accessible by all our residents and reflect the diversity of our rural district.
	Staffing	The Equality and Diversity Officer and the Equalities Project Officer are responsible for mainstreaming equalities into the Council with the support of the Equality and Diversity Steering Group and Equalities Consultative Forum.
	Risk Management	The Council could be successfully challenged over not complying with general equalities legislation or legislation specific to public and local authority bodies, <i>leading to</i> financial compensation payments and penalties, possible Commission for Human Rights and Equalities inspection, <i>resulting in</i> reduction in reserves available to support balanced MTFs, <i>adverse publicity and effect on reputation.</i>
	Equal Opportunities	The Gender and Race Equality Schemes are based on the idea of equal life chances and helps local authorities to develop an equal society for the community, which it serves.

Consultations

8. The current drafts of the Gender Equality Scheme and the Race Equality Scheme have both been updated following a 12-week period consultation period, which concluded on 26 July 2009. The Equality and Diversity Steering Group have since endorsed the current drafts.

Effect on Strategic Aims

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| 9. | Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all. |
| | The Gender and Race Equality Schemes will directly contribute to the achievement of this strategic aim, demonstrating that it is seeking and listening to the views of all residents and providing first class services to all. |

Conclusions/Summary

10. The Equality Schemes align with the commitments set out in the Comprehensive Equalities Policy 2009 -2012.
11. An Equalities Implementation Work Programme has been developed to meet the commitments outlined in the Comprehensive Equalities Policy. It addresses the most important things, which must be delivered, focusing particularly on compliance with statutory requirements. Key milestones include:
- Cabinet adopt a new Gender Equality Scheme in September 2009
 - Cabinet adopt a new Race Equality Scheme in September 2009

Recommendations

12. The Housing Portfolio Holder is invited to comment on and endorse the draft Gender Equality Scheme and Race Equality Scheme and recommend that Cabinet adopt the equality schemes in September 2009.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Comprehensive Equalities Policy 2009 -2012

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